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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 3924
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1413
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JUN 5205
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 9748
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 2610
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 2442
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 000822

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [ELAB](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: CONGRESS SUSPENDS DECREES TO DEFUSE PROTESTS

REF: LIMA 817 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Pol/C Alexis Ludwig for reasons 1.4(c) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: In an effort to reduce tensions and defuse protests, the Congressional plenary on June 10 voted to suspend decrees 1064 and 1090 for 90 days. Security forces are preparing for planned June 11 nation-wide protests, including one in downtown Lima. The Prime Minister has met with Church representatives and the Human Rights Ombudsman to seek a way out of the crisis. According to June 10 news reports, Aidesep leader Alberto Pizango was refused asylum by several countries before receiving it from Nicaragua. The international information battle has begun in earnest, with certain media outlets providing a highly biased version of government repression. End Summary.

Congress "Suspends" Decrees

12. (C) In an effort to reduce persistent tensions following the June 5 violence in Bagua and to defuse the energies behind the planned June 11 nationwide protest (refs), the Congressional plenary met June 10 to debate the "suspension" of Decrees 1064 and 1090, Peru's Forest and Wildlife law. After a vigorous debate, the plenary voted 57-47 in favor of the measure. The ruling APRA-party gained early support from the National Unity (UN) alliance and the Fujimorista bloc to introduce this measure, which calls for setting the Decrees aside for 90 days in order to give the government the time it needs to inform the public, and indigenous communities, about their real (and positive) ramifications.

13. (C) One Congressman who supported suspension told us the government would be able to sell the benefits of a good law to a skeptical population and then reinstate it, with minor modifications, later. Peruvian Nationalist Party representatives called for derogating the law once and for all, arguing that suspension was a cloudy idea that amounted to postponing the debate once again. Some Nationalist Party insiders separately told us that, while "suspending" the law was tantamount to derogating it, party representatives in Congress would vote against the measure to save face. They further acknowledged that decree 1090 was a good law over all, but could be improved with minor adjustments.

June 11 Strike

14. (C) Security forces are preparing for June 11 nation-wide strikes, scheduled to take place in Lima, Lambayeque, Huanuco, Cajamarca, Madre de Dios, Junin, Ayacucho and

elsewhere. The PNP estimates that some 3,000 people are likely to participate in downtown Lima, marching from one large plaza adjacent to Congress toward the Central Plaza in front of the Government Palace. We understand police plan to cordon off and block entry into the city's central plaza. According to some reports, infiltrators and "agents provocateurs," particularly in the Lima protests, are likely to seek to provoke further violent conflicts with the police. In addition to general "support for the demands of the indigenous tribes of Peru," protestors are calling for the government to:

-- revoke the legislative decrees that they say triggered the recent violence (decree 1060 is linked to the FTA;

-- annul the arrest warrant of Alberto Pizango, who is in the Embassy of Nicaragua;

-- and revoke the state of emergency and curfew in Amazonas

A large number of social, political and indigenous organizations have announced their participation in the protest, including Aidesep, the General Confederation of Peruvian Workers (CGTP) and other labor unions, Patria Roja, the Peruvian Communist and Socialist Parties and other groups

Aidesep Leader's Asylum

15. (C) The local media reported that the Government of Nicaragua has confirmed its decision to grant political asylum to Alberto Pizango, President of the Inter-ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Jungle (Aidesep) on humanitarian grounds and that the GON has requested safe-conduct to allow Pizango's free passage to Nicaragua. Peruvian Foreign Minister Jose Garcia Belaunde publicly responded that Peru would respect Nicaragua's decision. According to one report, the FM asserted that three countries -- the France, Bolivia, and the U.S. -- had denied Pizango asylum.

HR Ombudsman, Church's roles

16. (SBU) As the GOP searches for honest brokers in the crisis, PM Simon and other government officials have met with representatives of the HR Ombudsman's office and the Catholic Church, among others. Ombudswoman Beatriz Merino agreed to participate in negotiations between the executive and representatives of native communities try and reinstate dialog following the violent clashes reported in Bagua last week. Merino said she would ensure broad representation of indigenous communities to enable these groups to fully participate in negotiations. (With its leader absent from the scene, Aidesep is in organizational disarray and lacks interlocutors with the authority to represent community interests.) Simon also called on Merino to ensure Ombudsman representatives remain in Yurimaguas where the situation remains tense, with protestors maintaining their blockade of a section of the Yurimaguas - Tarapoto Highway.

Emerging Facts Amid Confusion

17. (C) The underlying facts surrounding the June 5 violence remain cloudy. Nonetheless, the emerging official version indicates that Peruvian National Police seeking to clear long-standing road blocks outside of Bagua were ambushed by protestors and, in some cases, stripped of their firearms and killed. Police then returned fire in self-defense. Subsequently, protestors surrounding a Petro-Peru pumping station entered the grounds and took 38 police personnel hostage. Nine of these 38 were later killed. The final (if not definitive) toll of the violence was 24 dead policemen and nine dead civilians, and over 150 injured. After sending a team to investigate, the Human Rights Ombudswoman rejected statements by a local priest that the bodies of a dozen indigenous people killed during Friday's clashes, had been buried in a mass grave, located in the area of El Reposo, between Bagua and Bagua Grande. Some observers have underscored the still high number of persons who remain

missing.

Comment: Information and Disinformation

18. (C) The fact that far more police than protestors appear to have been killed during the violence, however, has not stopped various news media outlets, national and international, from disseminating a radically different interpretation of events on the ground, sometimes even reversing the number of dead allegedly suffered by each side.

In this increasingly intensive information and misinformation campaign, it would appear that assuming the role of innocent victim represents the path to victory. In pursuit of this end, inconvenient facts are either brushed aside or actively altered. Government officials, including the Prime Minister, have acknowledged that their inability to accurately transmit the content of the decrees, and their clumsy response to the unexpected violence once it exploded, exacerbated a highly volatile situation. Yet, to buy into a highly biased version of events pitting innocent indigenous protestors against a repressive state machinery is to lose sight of the larger political struggle. In this struggle, mobilized radical elements with a plan are seeking to use a convenient pretext to undermine the credibility of a still consolidating democracy and to frame a stumbling, imperfect government with full responsibility for the worst crisis it has faced in its near three years.

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